

A LIFE-LONG OCCUPATION NO. 2048

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 14, 1888,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually,
that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.”
Hebrews 13:15.*

IT is instructive to notice where this verse stands. The connection is a golden setting to the gem of the text. Here we have a description of the believer's position before God. He has done with all carnal ordinances, and has no interest in the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law. Brethren, as believers in Jesus, who is the substance of all the outward types, we have, henceforth, nothing to do with altars of gold or of stone; our worship is spiritual, and our altar spiritual—

*“We rear no altar, Christ has died;
We deck no priestly shrine.”*

What then? Are we to offer no sacrifice? Very far from it. We are called upon to offer to God a continual sacrifice. Instead of presenting in the morning and the evening a sacrifice of lambs, and on certain holy days bringing bullocks and sheep to be slain, we are to present to God continually the sacrifice of praise. Having done with the outward, we now give ourselves entirely to the inward and to the spiritual. Do you see your calling, brethren?

Moreover, the believer is now, if he is where he ought to be, like his Master, “without the camp.” “Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” What then? If we are without the camp, have we nothing to do? Are we cut off from God as well as from men? Shall we fume and fret because we are not of the world? On the contrary, let us the more ardently pursue higher objects, and yield up our disentangled spirits to the praise and glory of God.

Do we come under contempt, as the Master did? Is it so, that we are “bearing His reproach”? Shall we sit down in despair? Shall we be crushed beneath this burden? No, verily; while we lose honor ourselves, we will ascribe honor to our God. We will count it all joy that we are counted worthy to be reproached for Christ's sake. Let us now praise God continually. Let the fruit of our lips be a still bolder confession of His name. Let us more and more earnestly make known His glory and His grace. If reproach is bitter, praise is sweet; we will drown the drops of gall in a sea of honey. If to have our name cast out as evil should seem to be derogatory to us, let us all the more see to it that we give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name. While the enemy reproaches us continually, our only reply shall be to offer the sacrifice of praise continually unto the Lord our God.

Moreover, the apostle says that “Here we have no continuing city.” Well, then, we will transfer the continuance from the city to the praise—“Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.” If everything here is going, let it go, but we will not cease to sing. If the end of all things is at hand, let them end, but our praises of the living God shall abide world without end. Set free from all the hamper of citizenship here below, we will begin the employment of citizens of heaven. It is not ours to arrange a new Socialism, or to set up to be dividers of heritages; we belong to a kingdom which is not of this world, a city of God eternal in the heavens. It is not ours to pursue the dreams of politicians, but to offer the sacrifices of God-ordained priests. As we are not of this world, it is ours to seek the world to come, and press forward to the place where the saints in Christ shall reign forever and ever.

You see, then, brethren, that the text is rather an unexpected one in its connection, but when properly viewed, it is the fittest that could be. The more we are made to feel that we are strangers in a strange land, the more should we addict ourselves to the praises of God, with whom we sojourn. Crucified to the world, and the world crucified to us, let us spend and be spent in the praises of Him who is our sole trust

and joy. Oh, to praise God, and still to praise Him, and never to be taken off from praising Him, let the world do what it may!

This morning my great business will be to stir you up, dear friends, as many of you as have been made kings and priests unto God by Jesus Christ, to exercise your holy office. I shall, to that end, first, concerning the Christian, *describe his sacrifice*. Secondly, *examine its substance*. Thirdly, *commend its exercise*, and fourthly, *commence it at once*.

I. First, then, concerning a believer, let me DESCRIBE HIS SACRIFICE. “By Him therefore.” See, at the very threshold of all offering of sacrifice to God, *we begin with Christ*. We cannot go a step without Jesus. Without a Mediator we can make no advance to God. Apart from Christ there is no acceptable prayer, no pleasing sacrifice of any sort. “By Him therefore”—we cannot move a lip acceptably without Him who suffered without the gate. The great High Priest of our profession meets us at the sanctuary door, and we place all our sacrifices into His hands, that He may present them for us. You do not wish it to be otherwise, I am quite sure. If you could do anything without Him, you would feel afraid to do it. You only feel safe when He is with you, and you are “accepted in the beloved.” Be thankful that at the beginning of your holy service your eyes are turned towards your Lord. You are to offer continual sacrifice, looking unto Jesus. Behold our great Melchizedek meets us! Let us give Him tithes of all, and receive His blessing, which will repay us a thousand-fold. Let us never venture upon a sacrifice apart from Him, lest it be the sacrifice of Cain, or the sacrifice of fools. He is that altar which sanctifies both gift and giver; by Him therefore let our sacrifices both of praise and of almsgiving be presented unto God.

Next, observe that *this sacrifice is to be presented continually*. “By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually*.” Attentively treasure up that word. It will not do for you to say, “We have been exhorted to praise God on the Sabbath day.” No, I have not exhorted you to such occasional duty; “continually,” says the text, and that means seven days in a week. I would not have you say, “He means that we are to praise God in the morning when we awake, and in the evening before we fall asleep.” Do that, my brethren, unflinching, but that is not what I have to set before you. “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually*”—“*continually*”—that is to say, without ceasing. Let us make an analogous precept to that which says “pray without ceasing,” and say “praise without ceasing.” Not only in this place or that place, but in every place, we are to praise the Lord our God. Not only when we are in a happy frame of mind, but when we are cast down and troubled. The perfumed smoke from the altar of incense is to rise towards heaven both day and night, from the beginning of the year to the year’s end. Not only when we are in the assembly of the saints are we to praise God, but when we are called to pass through Vanity Fair, where sinners congregate. Bless the Lord at all times. Not alone in your secret chamber, which is fragrant with the perfume of your communion with God, but yonder in the field, and there in the street, yes, and in the hurry and noise of the Exchange, offer the sacrifice of praise to God. You cannot always be speaking His praise, but you can always be living His praise. The heart once set on praising God will, like the stream which leaps down the mountain’s side, continue still to flow in its chosen course. A soul saturated with divine gratitude will continue, almost unconsciously, to give forth the sacred odor of praise, which will permeate the atmosphere of every place, and make itself known to all who have a spiritual nostril with which to discern sweetness. There is no moment in which it would be right to suspend the praises of God; let us therefore offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually*. This should be done, not only by some of us—pastor, elders, deacons, and special workers—but by all of you. The apostle says, “Let *us*,” and therein he calls upon all of us who have any participation in the great sacrifice of Christ to go with Him without the camp, and then and there to stand with Him in our places, and continually offer the sacrifice of praise unto God. You see, then, that the two important points are—always, and always through Christ.

The apostle goes on to tell us what the sacrifice is—*the sacrifice of praise*. Praise, that is, heart-worship, or adoration. Adoration is the grandest form of earthly service. We ascribe unto Jehovah, the one living and true God, all honor and glory. When we see His works, when we hear His Word, when we taste His grace, when we mark His providence, when we think upon His name; our spirit bows in the humblest reverence before Him, and magnifies Him as the all-glorious Lord. Let us abide continually in the spirit of adoration, for this is praise in its purest form.

Praise is heart-trust and heart-content with God. Trust is adoration applied to practical purposes. Let us go into the world trusting God, believing that He orders all things well, resolving to do everything as He commands, for neither His character, nor His decrees, nor His commandments are grievous to us. We delight in the Lord as He is pleased to reveal Himself, let that revelation be what it may. We believe not only that God is, but that He is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him; let us so praise Him that we shall not be baffled if our good work brings us no immediate recompense, for we are satisfied that He is not unrighteous to forget our work of faith. Let us praise Him by being perfectly satisfied with anything and everything that He does or appoints. Let us take a hallowed delight in Him, and in all that concerns Him. Let Him be to us “God, our exceeding joy.” Do you know what it is to delight yourselves in God? Then, in that continual satisfaction, offer Him continual praise. Life is no longer sorrowful, even amid sorrow, when God is in it, its soul and crown. It is worth while to live the most afflicted and tried life, so long as we know God, and taste His love. Let Him do what seems Him good, so long as He will but be a God to us, and permit us to call Him our Father and our God.

Praise is heart-enjoyment, the indulgence of gratitude and wonder. The Lord has done so much for me that I must praise Him, or feel as if I had a fire shut up within me. I may speak for many of you, for you also are saying, “He has done great things for us.” Brethren, the Lord has favored you greatly; before the earth was, He chose you, and entered into covenant with you; He gave you to His Son, and gave His Son to you. He has manifested Himself to you as He does not to the world; even now He breathes a child-like spirit into you, whereby you cry, “Abba, Father.” Surely you must praise Him! How can you ever satisfy the cravings of your heart if you do not extol Him? Your obligations rise above you as high as the heavens above the earth. The vessel of your soul has foundered in this sea of love, and gone down fifty fathoms deep in it. High over its masthead the main ocean of eternal mercy is rolling with its immeasurable billows of grace. You are swallowed up in the fathomless abyss of infinite love. You are absorbed in adoring wonder and affection. Like Leah when Judah was born, you cry, “Now will I praise the Lord.”

Have you not, in addition to this, the praise of heart-feeling, while within you burns an intense love to God? Could you love anyone as you love God? After you have poured out the stream of your love upon the dearest earthly ones, do you not feel you have something more within, which all created vessels could not contain? The heart of man yields love without stint, and the stream is too large for the lake into which it flows, so long as we love a created being. Only the infinite God can ever contain all the love of a loving heart. There is a fitness for the heart, and a fullness for its emotions when Jehovah is the heart’s one object of love. My God, I love You! You know all things; You know that I love You. Instead of quibbling at the Lord because of certain stern truths which we read concerning Him, we are enabled in these to worship Him by bowing our reason to His revelation. That which we cannot understand we nevertheless believe, and believing, we adore. It is not ours to arraign the Almighty, but to submit to Him. We are not His censors, but His servants. We do not legislate, but love. He is good, supremely good in our esteem, and infinitely blessed of our hearts. We do not consider what He ought to be, but we learn what He is, and as such we love and adore Him. Thus have I gone roundabout the shell of praise, but what it really is you must each one know for himself.

The text evidently deals with *spoken praise*—“Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name,” or, as the Revised Version has it, “the fruit of lips which make confession to His name.” So, then, we are *to utter* the praises of God, and it is not sufficient *to feel* adoring emotions. The priesthood of believers requires them to praise God with their lips. Should we not sing a great deal more than we do? Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs should abound in our homes. It is our duty to sing as much as possible; we should praise as much as we pray. “I have no voice!” says one. Cultivate it till you have. “But mine is a cracked voice!” Ah, well! It may be cracked to human ears, and yet be melodious unto God. To Him the music lies in the heart, not in the sound. Praise the Lord with song and psalm. Some few godly men whom I have known have gone about the fields and along the roads humming sacred songs continually. These are the troubadours and minstrels of our King. Happy profession! May more of us become such birds of Paradise! Hear how the ungodly world pours out its mirth! Oftentimes their song is so silly as to be utterly devoid of meaning. Are they

not ashamed? Then let us not be ashamed. Children of God, sing the songs of Zion, and let your hearts be joyful before your King. "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms."

But if we cannot sing so well or as constantly as we would desire, let us talk. We cannot say that we cannot talk. Perhaps some might be better if they could not talk quite so much. As we can certainly talk continually, let us as continually offer to God the sacrifice of praise, by speaking well of His name. Talk you of all His wondrous works. Let us abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness. Let us praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men. Many whom you judge to be irreligious would be greatly interested if you were to relate to them the story of God's love to you. But if they are not interested, you are not responsible for that; only tell it as often as you have opportunity. We charge you, as Jesus did the healed man, "Go home to your friends, and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you." Speak, and speak, and speak again, for the instruction of others, for the confirmation of those who have faith, and for the routing of the doubts of those who believe not. Tell what God has done for you. Does not our conversation want more flavoring with the praise of God? We put into it too much vinegar of complaint, and forget the sugar of gratitude. This year, when the harvest seems to have been snatched from between the jaws of the destroyer, our friends say, "Well, things look a shade better," and I am glad to get them up even as high as that. Hear the general talk, "Things are very bad. Business is dreadful. Trade never was so bad." When I was a boy things were very bad, never were so bad, and I think ever since they have been so bad that they could not be worse, and yet somehow people live, and even farmers are not all turned to skin and bone. Surely, surely, we had better mend our talk, and speak more brightly and cheerily of what God does for us! How can we offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually if we perpetually rail at His providence? Christian men, if you are ever driven to a murmur, let it be the momentary mistake of your extremity, but come back again to contentment and gratitude, which is your proper and acceptable condition. Hear the word of the Lord, which says, "Neither murmur you, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer."

In short, praise means this, that you and I are appointed to tell of the goodness of God, just as the birds of spring wake up before the sun and begin singing, and singing, and singing, all of them, with all their might. Become the choristers of God. Praise you the Lord evermore, even as they do who, with songs and choral symphonies, day without night, circle His throne rejoicing. This is your office, and it is a holy and a privileged one.

"Well," says one, "I cannot force myself to praise." I do not want you to force yourself to it; *this praise is to be natural*. It is called the fruit of the lips. In the Book of Hosea, from which the apostle quotes, our version reads, "The calves of our lips." Whether the word is "calves" in the Hebrew original or not, is a matter in dispute, but the translators of the Septuagint certainly read it "fruit," and this seems more clear and plain. The apostle, quoting it from the Greek translation, has endorsed it as being correct. These lips of ours must produce fruit. Our words are leaves; how soon they wither! The praise of God is the fruit which can be stored up and presented to the Lord. Fruit is a natural product; it grows without force, the free outcome of the plant. So let praise grow out of your lips at its own sweet will. Let it be as natural to you, as regenerated men and women, to praise God as it seems to be natural to profane men to blaspheme the sacred name.

This praise is to be sincere and real. The next verse tells us we are to do good and communicate, and joins this with praise to God. Many will give God a waterfall of words, but scarce a drop of true gratitude in the form of substance consecrated. When I am pressed with many cares about the Lord's work, I often wish that some of my brethren would be a little more mindful of its pecuniary needs. I should be much relieved if those who can spare it would help different portions of our home service. It should be the joy of a Christian to use his substance in his Master's service. When we are in a right state of heart we do not want anybody to call upon us to extract a subscription from us, but we go and ask, "Is there anything that needs help?" Is any part of the Lord's business in need just now? The great works, such as the Orphanage and College, are provided for, but I often sigh as I see lesser agencies left without help, not because friends would not aid if they were pressed to do so, but because there is not a ready mind to look out for opportunities. Yet that ready mind is the very fat of the sacrifice. I long to see everywhere Christian friends who will not need to be asked, but will make the Lord's business their business, and

take in hand some branch of work in the church, or among the poor, or for the spread of the gospel. Brethren, let your gift be an outburst of a free and gracious spirit, which takes delight in showing that it does not praise God in word only, but in deed and in truth. In this church let us excel in generous gifts. As the year ripens to its close, see that everything is provided in the house of the Lord, and that there is no lack in any quarter. This practical praising of the Lord is the life-office of every true believer. See you to it.

II. We will, secondly, for a few minutes EXAMINE THE SUBSTANCE OF THIS SACRIFICE. “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.”

To praise God continually will need *a childlike faith in Him*. You must believe His word, or you will not praise His name. Doubt snaps the harp-strings. Question mars all melody. Trust Him, lean on Him, enjoy Him—you will never praise Him otherwise. Unbelief is the deadly enemy of praise.

Faith must lead you into *personal communion with the Lord*. It is to Him that the praise is offered, and not to our fellow men. The most beautiful singing in the world, if it is intended for the ears of musical critics, is worth nothing. Only that is praise which is meant for God. O my Lord, my song shall find You! Every part of my being shall have its attribute to sing. I will sing unto the Lord, and unto the Lord, alone. You must live in fellowship with God, or you cannot praise Him.

You must have also an overflowing content, *a real joy in Him*. Dear brothers and sisters, be sure that you do not lose your joy. If you ever lose the joy of religion, you will lose the power of religion. Do not be satisfied to be a miserable believer. An unhappy believer is a poor creature, but he who is resigned to being so is in a dangerous condition. Depend upon it, greater importance attaches to holy happiness than most people think. As you are happy in the Lord you will be able to praise His name. Rejoice in the Lord, that you may praise Him.

There must also be *a holy earnestness* about this. Praise is called a sacrifice because it is a very sacred and solemn thing. People who came to the altar with their victims came there with the hush of reverence, the trembling of awe. We cannot praise God with levity. He is in heaven, and we are upon the earth; He is thrice holy, and we are sinful; we must put off our shoes in lowly reverence, and worship with intense adoration, or else He cannot be pleased with our sacrifices. When life is real, life is earnest, and it must be both real and earnest when it is spent to the praise of the great and ever-blessed God.

To praise God continually, you need to cultivate *perpetual gratitude*, and surely it cannot be hard to do that! Remember, every misery averted is a mercy bestowed, every sin forgiven is a favor granted; every duty performed is also a grace received. The people of God have an inexhaustible treasury of good things provided for them by the infinite God, and for all this they should praise Him. I pray you, be not only a little grateful, but overflow with it. Let your praises be like the waters of fountains which are abundantly supplied. Let the stream leap up to heaven in bursts of enthusiasm; let it fall to earth again in showers of beneficence; let it fill the basin of your daily life, and run over into the lives of others, and from there again in a waterfall of glittering joy let it still descend.

In order for this kind of praise you will need *a deep and ardent admiration of the Lord God*. Admire the Father—think much of His love; acquaint yourself with His perfections. Admire the Son of God, the altogether lovely One, and as you mark His gentleness, self-denial, love and grace, suffer your heart to be wholly enamored of Him. Admire the patience, and condescension of the Holy Spirit, that He should visit you, and dwell in you, and bear with you. It cannot be difficult to the sanctified and instructed heart to be filled with a great admiration of the Lord God. This is the raw material of praise. An intelligent admiration of God, kindled into flame by gratitude, and fanned by delight and joy, must ever produce praise. Living in personal converse with God, and trusting Him as a child trusts its father, it cannot be difficult for the soul continually to offer the sacrifice of praise to God through Jesus Christ.

III. I have been very brief upon that point because I want, in the third place, to COMMEND THIS BLESSED EXERCISE.

“Offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually,” because in so doing *you will answer the end of your being*. Every creature is happiest when it is doing what it is made for. A bird that is made to fly abroad pines in a cage, an eagle would die in the water, even as a fish that is made to swim perishes on the river’s bank. Christians are made to glorify God, and we are never in our element till we are praising

Him. The happiest moments you have ever spent were those in which you lost sight of everything inferior, and bowed before Jehovah's throne of light with reverent joy and blissful praise. I can say it is so with me, and I doubt not it is so with you. When your whole soul is full of praise, you have at last reached the goal that your heart is aiming at. Your ship is now in full sail; your car is on the tram-lines. Your life moves smoothly and safely on. This is the groove along which it was made to slide. Before, you were trying to do what you were not made to do, but now you are at home. For the praise of God your new nature was fashioned, and it finds rest therein. Keep to this work. Do not degrade yourself by a less divine employment.

Praise God again, because *it is His due*. Should Jehovah be left unpraised? Praise is the rent which He asks of us for the enjoyment of all things; shall we be slow to pay? Will a man rob God? When it is such a happy work to give Him His due, shall we deny it? It blesses us to bless the Lord. Shall we limit God in the measure of His glory? He does not stint us in His goodness. Come, my brother, my sister, if you have become sorrowful of late, shake off your gloom, and awake all your instruments of music to praise the Lord! Let not murmuring and complaining be so much as mentioned among saints. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name. Shall not the Lord be praised? Surely the very stones and rocks must break their everlasting silence in indignation if the children of God do not praise His name.

Praise Him, dear brethren, continually, for *it will help you in everything else*. A man full of praise is ready for all other holy exercises. Such is my bodily pain and weakness, that I could not have forced myself to preach this morning if I had not felt that I must come here to bid you praise God. I thought that my pain might give emphasis to my words. I do praise the Lord; I must praise Him. It is a duty which I hope to perform in my last moments, the Holy Spirit helping me. So you see praise helps me to preach. Whenever you go forth to any service, even though it is nothing better than taking down the shutters, and waiting behind the counter, you will do it all the better for being in the spirit of praise and gratitude. If you are a domestic servant, and can praise God continually, you will be a comfort in the house, and if you are a master, and are surrounded with the troubles of life, if your heart is always blessing the Lord, you will keep up your spirits, and you will not be sharp and ill-tempered with those around you. Come, brethren, this is both meat and medicine—this praising the Lord. You birds of heaven, strange to say, this singing will plume your wings for flight! The praises of God put wings upon pilgrims' heels, so that they not only run but fly.

This will *preserve us from many evils*. When the heart is full of the praise of God, it has not time to find fault and grow proudly angry with its fellows. Somebody has said a very nasty thing about us. Well, well; we will answer him when we have got through the work we have in hand, namely, praising God continually. At present we have a great work to do, and cannot come down to wrangle. Self-love and its natural irritations die in the blaze of praise. If you praise God continually, the vexations and troubles of life will be cheerfully borne. Praise makes the happy man the strong man. The joy of the Lord is your strength. Praising God makes us to drink of the brook by the way, and lift up the head. We cannot fear while we can praise. Neither can we be bribed by the world's favor, nor cowed by its frown. Praise makes men, yes, angels of us; let us abound in it.

Brethren, let us praise God because *it will be a means of usefulness*. I believe that a life spent in God's praise would in itself be a missionary life. That matronly sister, who never delivered a sermon, or even a lecture, in all her days, has lived a quiet, happy, useful, loving life, and her family has learned from her to trust the Lord. Even when she shall have passed away, they will feel her influence, for she was the angel of the house. Being dead, she yet will speak. A praiseful heart is eloquent for God. Mere verbiage, what is it but as autumn leaves, which will be consumed in smothering smoke? But praise is golden fruit to be presented in baskets of silver unto the dresser of the vineyard.

Praise God, brethren, because *this is what God loves*. Notice how the next verse puts it, "With such sacrifices God is well pleased." Would we not do anything and everything to please God? It seems too good to be true that we can impart any pleasure to the ever-blessed One; yet it is so, for He has declared that He is well pleased with the praises and the gifts of His children. Therefore let us withhold nothing from our dear Father, our blessed God. Can I please Him? Tell me what it is; I will do it straight away. I will not deliberate, but without reserve make haste. If I deliberate, it shall be that I may make the service

twice as large, or perform it in more careful style, for if I may praise Him, it shall be an honor, yes, and it shall be heaven to me.

To close this commendation, remember that *this will fit you for heaven*. Our hymn expresses a frequent aspiration—

*“I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise.”*

You can begin the music here—begin the hallelujahs of glory by praising God here below. Think of how you will praise Him when you see His face, and never, never sin. Exceedingly magnify the Lord even now, and rehearse the music of the skies. In glory you may rise to a higher key, but let the song be the same even here. Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him more and more! Rise on rounds of praise up the ladder of His glory, till you reach the top, and are with Him to praise Him better than ever before. Oh, that our lives may not be broken, but may be all of one piece; one psalm, forever rising, verse by verse, into the eternal hallelujahs!

IV. I have brought you thus far, and so I come to the closing point, which is, LET US COMMENCE AT ONCE. What does the text say? It says, “Let *us* offer the sacrifice of praise continually.” The apostle does not say, “By and by get to this work, when you are able to give up business, and have retired to the country, or when you are near to die,” but now, at once, he says, “Let *us* offer the sacrifice of praise.”

Listen! Who is speaking? Whose voice do I hear? Ah! I know, it is the apostle Paul. He says, “Let *us* offer the sacrifice of praise”! Where are you, Paul? His voice sounds from within a low place. I believe he is shut up in a dungeon. Lift up your hand, O venerable Paul! I can hear the clanking of a fetter. Yes, Paul cries, “Let *us* offer the sacrifice of praise. I, Paul the aged, in prison in Rome, wish you to join with me in a sacrifice of praise to God.” Amen. We will do so. O Paul, we are not in prison, and we are not all aged, and none of us are galled with fetters on our wrists, but we can join heartily with you in praising God this morning, and we do so. Come, let *us* praise God—

*“Stand up and bless the Lord,
You people of His choice;
Stand up and bless the Lord your God,
With heart and soul and voice.”*

You have heard Paul’s voice, now hear mine. Join with me, and let *us* offer the sacrifice of praise. Brothers and sisters, we have known each other for many a year and we have worked together in different ways for the Lord, and as a church and people we have received great favors from the Lord’s hand. Come; let us join together with heart and hand to bless the name of the Lord, and worship joyfully before Him. With words and with gifts let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually. If I were to select certain of the members, and call upon them one by one, I should say, “Come, brother So-and-so, let us offer the sacrifice of praise.” I am sure that the brother would get up and unite with me very cordially, as in a brotherly duet we praised the Lord our God. I will not at this present call upon any of you, but if I did say, “Sister So-and-so, let us offer praise to God,” many of you would reply, “Ah, Pastor! If nobody else can praise Him, we can, and we will.” Well, well, kindly take it as done, so far as the outward expression is concerned, but inwardly let us at once offer the sacrifice of praise to God by Jesus Christ. Let us stir one another up to praise. Let us spend today, and tomorrow, and all the rest of our days in praising God. If we catch one another a little grumbling or coldly silent, let us in kindness to each other give the needful rebuke. It will not do; we must praise the Lord. Just as the leader of an orchestra taps his baton to call all to attention, and then to begin singing, so I this morning beseech you and bestir you to offer the sacrifice of praise unto the Lord.

The apostle has put us rather in a fix; he compels us to offer sacrifice. Did you notice what he said in the tenth verse? He says, “We have an altar.” It is not a material altar, but a spiritual one; yet “we have an altar.” May the priests of the old law offer sacrifice on it? Answer, “Whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle.” They ate of the sacrifices laid on the altars of the old law but they have no right here. Those who keep to ritualistic performances, and outward ceremonials, have no right here. Yet we have an altar. Brothers and Sisters, can we imagine that this altar is given us of the Lord to be never used? Is no sacrifice to be presented on the best of altars? We have an altar—what then? If we have an altar, do not allow it to be neglected, deserted, unused. It is not for spiders to spin their webs upon; it is

not fit that it should be smothered with the dust of neglect. “We have an altar.” What then? “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.” Do you not see the force of the argument? Practically obey it.

Beside the altar we have a High Priest. There is the Lord Jesus Christ, dressed in His robes of glory and beauty, standing within the veil at this moment, ready to present our offerings. Shall He stand there, and have nothing to do? What would you think of our great High Priest waiting at the altar, with nothing to present which His redeemed had brought to God? No, “by Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.” Bring here abundantly, you people of God, your praises, your prayers, your thank offerings, and present them to the Ever-blessed!

Well may you do so if you will read the connection, for the passage brings before you many things which should compel you to praise God. Behold your Savior in His passion, offered without the gate! Gaze upon His five bleeding wounds, His sacred head so wounded, His face so full of anguish, His heart bursting with the agony of sin! Can you see that sight, and not praise God? Behold redemption accomplished, sin pardoned, salvation purchased, hell vanquished, death abolished, and all this achieved by your blessed Lord and Master! Can you see all this, and not praise Him? His precious blood falling on you, and making you clean, bringing you near to God, making you acceptable before the infinite holiness of the Most High! Can you see yourself thus favored, and behold the precious blood which did it, and not praise His name?

Yonder in the distance, seen dimly, perhaps, but yet not doubtfully, behold “a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” White-robed, the purified are singing to their golden harps, and you will soon be there. When a few more days or years are passed, you will be among the glorified. A crown and a harp are reserved for you. Will you not begin to praise God, and glorify Him for the heaven which is in store for you? With these two sights so wonderfully contrasted—the Passion and the Paradise—Jesus in His humiliation and Jesus in His glory, and yourself a sharer in both these wondrous scenes—surely if you do not begin to offer the perpetual sacrifice of thanksgivings and praise unto God, you must be something harder than stone. God grant us to commence this day those praises which shall never be suspended throughout eternity!

Oh, that you, who have never praised God before, would begin now! Alas! Some of you have no Christ to praise, and no Savior to bless. Yet you need not so abide. By faith you may lay hold upon Jesus, and He then becomes yours. Trust Him, and He will justify your trust. Rest in the Lord, and the Lord is your rest. When you have trusted, then waste no time, but at once commence the business for which you were created, and redeemed, and called. Fill the censer with the sweet spices of gratitude and love, and lay on the burning coals of earnestness, and fervency. Then, when praise begins to rise from you like pillars of smoke, swing the censer to and fro in the presence of the Most High, and more and more laud, bless, and magnify the Lord that lives forever. Let your heart dance at the sound of His name, and let your lips show forth His salvation. The Lord anoint you this day to the priesthood of praise, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HEBREWS 13.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—176, 103 (VERSION 2), 775.

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